

The ABCs of Bullying: Addressing, Blocking, and Curbing School Aggression

Fact Sheet: Prevention and Intervention—Teachers

Teachers are the most effective deterrent to bullying. Schools that have actively reduced bullying have teachers that are committed to stopping bullying, can recognize bullying, and know how to safeguard their students against it. Teachers need to influence their administrators to implement curricula that promote kindness, communication, cooperation, and empathy.

Teachers can also do the following:

- Discuss and post rules on how to behave. Increase student ownership of rules by soliciting opinions from students.
- Implement immediate consequences for aggressive behavior and immediate rewards for acceptable behavior. Possible sanctions for the bully:
 - Discuss the incident with the teacher, principal, and/or parents
 - Pay for damaged belongings
 - Spend time in the office or another classroom
 - Forfeit recess or other privileges
- Conduct class meetings to discuss bullying and what to do about it.
- Encourage respect for individual differences and empathy with others.
- Explain that “tattling” and “reporting” differ: tattling involves trying to get someone *in* trouble; reporting, trying to get someone *out of* trouble.
- Acknowledge improved behavior by the bully.
- Institute a “bully box” for students to report bullying instances confidentially.
- Teach bystanders to make friends with the victims of bullying.
- Keep a log of bullying incidents to identify patterns in bullying behavior.
- Do not expect students to resolve things themselves. Mediation between victim and bully has proved ineffective.

When working with students who are the victims of bullying, teachers should involve them in groups and situations to help them make friends and develop social skills. Examples include peer support groups, new student orientation, or a cooperative learning group. Teachers should also encourage them to participate in assertiveness training, either in school or the community.

For students who bully, teachers need to try to reeducate them about their behavior, its impact, and the resulting consequences. Children who bully need concrete examples of inappropriate behavior and tools to help them behave in nonviolent and non-aggressive ways. Teachers also need to determine what situations require sanctions, such as removing privileges or detention. Adding lessons on empathy is a good way to help all students grasp the importance of another child’s feelings.

Witnesses to bullying, who are also affected by it, play a large role in prevention efforts. Teachers can educate witnesses on the difference between tattling and reporting. Witnesses also need to learn how to support the victims of bullying, rather than the bullies.

Emotional Health Education

Teachers can also work with social workers to include emotional health education in the curriculum, which can help prevent students who are bullied from becoming bullies themselves, and can help all students develop self-acceptance, respect, and tolerance for others.

This process allows students to talk about painful feelings rather than cover them up or distort them. Components of this emotional health approach include the following aspects:

- Teaching students to identify, rather than ignore, negative feelings about the bullying and other circumstances.
- Helping students recognize that, unfortunately, exclusion, rejection, and humiliation are part of life, but people can learn the emotional skills to overcome difficult situations.
- Encouraging teachers and other school staff to talk to students openly about loss and rejection.
- Training teachers and other school staff to become positive and emotionally healthy role models.

References

- Brewster, C., & Railsback, J. (2001, December). *Schoolwide prevention of bullying* (By Request Series). Retrieved 1/15/04 from Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory Web site: <http://www.nwrel.org/request/>
- Brill, R. R. (2000, Summer/Fall). School responsibility for assisting students who are bullied. In *On the Move*. Retrieved 2/4/04 from University of Maryland Web site: <http://csmha.umaryland.edu/csmha2001/onthemove-sumfall2000-cont.php3>
- Mayer, G. R., Ybarra, W. J., & Fogliatti, H. (2001). *Addressing bullying in schools*. Retrieved 2/4/04 from Los Angeles County Office of Education Web site: <http://www.lacoe.edu/lacoeweb/orgs/158/index.cfm>
- Starr, L. (2003). Bullying intervention strategies that work. In *Education World*. Retrieved October 28, 2003, from http://www.education-world.com/a_issues/issues103.shtml